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WESTERN DUCK SICKNESS
EXPLAINED IN BULLETIN

Unless favorable water conditions can be restored on the marshy areas and shallow lakes, where western sickness has been killing uncounted thousands of wildfowl, this disease will continue to take its devastating toll of birds. Conditions may even grow worse, says a technical bulletin (No. 411) recently issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The publication is entitled, "Western Duck Sickness: A Form of Botulism," by E. R. Kalmbach; with bacteriological contributions by Millard F. Gunderson.

Studies by the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1929, 1930, and 1931, showed that western duck sickness is a form of food poisoning. Outbreaks of the disease are caused largely by environmental factors such as inadequate water supplies and fluctuating water levels. These conditions, the bulletin explains, encourage the development of the causative organism of the disease--a bacterium, Clostridium botulinum, type C. This organism produces a food poison that causes the malady in birds that feed on infected materials. In the United States this botulinus bacteria is a frequent cause of limberneck in poultry and of forage poisoning in livestock.

The most effective remedial measures, says the bulletin, are those of prevention, brought about by flooding or drying the stagnant water or mud-flat areas in which the disease has occurred. Some birds have been saved by frightening them from known infected areas, others by rescuing afflicted individuals, which, handled

carefully, gained opportunity for recovery.

An 82-page publication, the bulletin describes where the disease occurs and is deadly. The bulletin lists the species of birds affected, and discusses the susceptibility of birds, other animals affected, human beings and type C botulism, symptomatology, and pathology. The bulletin explains the way in which the Biological Survey investigators demonstrated that botulism is the cause of duck sickness. It describes the factors responsible for duck sickness or influencing its distribution and recommends remedial measures.

Technical Bulletin 411-T, Western Duck Sickness: A Form of Botulism, may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., at 10 cents a copy.